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TO RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3403
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INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000005

SIPDIS

NAIROBI FOR SOMALIA UNIT

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TAGS: [DJ](#) [PREL](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI/SOMALILAND: CLOSER TIES BUT NO RECOGNITION

REF: A. DJIBOUTI 997

[1](#)B. DJIBOUTI 1032

Classified By: Amb. J. Swan for reasons 1.4 (b)(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Djibouti-Somaliland relations continue their warming trend (Ref A). Somaliland President Dahir Kahin Rayale was received with great honor during his visit to Djibouti Dec. 19-21, which included four hours of meetings with Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh. The GODJ is open to re-establishment of a Somaliland liaison office in Djibouti. But the GODJ Foreign Minister stresses that Djibouti maintains its "one-Somalia" policy, and has made clear to the Hargeisa authorities that it does not support formal recognition. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The GODJ warmly welcomed Somaliland President Rayale during his brief visit to Djibouti Dec. 19-21, according to reports from Somaliland Foreign Minister Abdillahi Duale and National Security Advisor Mohamed Nur Osman corroborated by GODJ Foreign Minister Mahmoud Yousseuf. The timing of the visit centered on a meeting between Rayale and visiting U.S. Senator Russell Feingold (Ref B.) According to both GODJ and Somaliland contacts, Rayale was received at the airport by the GODJ Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Information Minister -- an unusually high-level welcoming party for any foreign dignitary. The Somaliland delegation met with President Guelleh for a total of four hours on Dec. 20, including lunch, meetings with senior officials, and a tete-a-tete between Guelleh and Rayale.

[1](#)3. (C) GODJ Foreign Minister Yousseuf clarified to Ambassador and DCM Jan. 4 that, notwithstanding the honors accorded to Rayale, GODJ policy toward Somalia continued to be guided by three principles:

-- staunch GODJ adherence to a "one-Somalia policy" as demonstrated by GODJ efforts to achieve reconciliation in Somalia (Yousseuf said it would take a "major shock" to cause Djibouti to revisit this position);

-- GODJ reluctance to be the first to recognize an independent Somaliland, a position that has been conveyed to the Hargeisa authorities;

-- GODJ willingness to engage with the Somaliland government on a "de facto" basis in view of the close trade, cultural, and demographic connections between the two neighbors.

[1](#)4. (C) Yousseuf confirmed that the GODJ is eager to see a Somaliland liaison office reopened in Djibouti. He explained that the office had earlier been "suspended" in late 2006 due to a dispute over livestock exports. There is now agreement to re-establish the office, although he did not have an exact

date when this is expected. He also confirmed plans for the Commercial and Industrial Bank of the Red Sea (BCI-MR), a Djibouti-based bank in which the GODJ has approximately one-third equity, to open an office in Hargeisa. (BCI-MR Director Ould Amar Yahya told Ambassador Dec. 27 that the bank indeed planned to open a small office to permit Hargeisa-based customers to sign documents and order money transfers without having to travel to Djibouti. The office will not, however, accept deposits or provide cashier services.) Foreign Minister Yousseuf said that the GODJ would take a "go slow" approach on the Somaliland authorities' proposal to establish joint commissions to deepen bilateral relations.

15. (C) Comment: While relations with Somaliland are improving, the GODJ is proceeding cautiously and remains skeptical of formal recognition of the Hargeisa government.
SWAN